

Keeping a Resurrection Perspective

By Linda Rex

April 16, 2023, 2nd Sunday / Resurrection or Easter—These past two weeks I have felt as though those of us who live in the Nashville area have been hit over and over with a ton of bricks. And not only us, but I think also of Mississippi, Iowa, Alabama, and other places around the world which have been torn apart by catastrophic events.

When we're in this place of suffering, it is easy to lose our resurrection perspective. When all we can see and all we are experiencing is the brokenness of humankind and our planet, to keep our attention on things above seems pie-in-the-sky and unrealistic. Give us answers to our suffering and our problems—not sympathy!

Having a resurrection perspective, though, is not about ignoring the suffering and evil in this world. No, it is about empathy—about entering into that suffering and evil to the point that Jesus was willing to allow himself to be crucified, buried, and left for dead. It is about being willing to meet you and me at the place of our worst, to become sin for us, to bring us up to be with Jesus in his best—the resurrection and ascension.

Think of Peter, who bragged that he would be with Jesus until the end. But then, in the moment of crisis, he denied Jesus three times, even to the point of heated cursing and swearing, saying that he didn't even know Christ. In one gospel, we see Jesus at that very point looking across the courtyard to catch Peter's eye. Jesus knew exactly what he had done, and Peter was devastated.

Can you understand the difficulty Peter faced as he coped with Jesus' death? If Jesus was gone forever, he had no way of making right the horrendous thing he had done. If Jesus was truly dead after his crucifixion, then how would Peter be able to live with himself. But he had seen Jesus on the mountain when he was transfigured. On Sunday morning as he and John heard the news "Jesus is risen" and ran to the tomb, he saw that the graveclothes were laying where they had been left as Jesus arose. What hope must have burned in Peter's heart!

To have a resurrection perspective is to see beyond the suffering, to see beyond the grave. To have a resurrection perspective is to believe that we are not abandoned or left to fend for ourselves. To have a resurrection perspective is to understand that this life is not all there is—we are created for life in relationship with Father, Son, and Spirit—even now, and in the new heavens and earth which are to come.

To have a resurrection perspective means that we realize life is painful and difficult, but God is taking it and using it to form us into the image of Christ, as we respond to the gentle presence of his Spirit. And to have a resurrection perspective is to realize that we are never alone. God is with us through Christ in the Spirit, active in our lives and in our world, as we participate with him in his redemption and restoration of all things.

This is why we are called by God to be witnesses—to testify to the reality of the risen Lord. If our focus is on our suffering or on everything that is going wrong, we will find our lives and this world a very dark place in which to live. We will be burdened by and battered by the brokenness and darkness of the world in which we live. But as we encounter this brokenness and darkness, we are reminded to turn to Jesus, to bring our concerns to him, and to invite the Spirit to show us ways in which we can participate with Christ in his redemptive work. We can keep our resurrection perspective, allowing it to inform how we approach our suffering and our response to evil and darkness, rather than being overcome by it.

Thank you, Father, for being in Christ as he suffered and died for us. Thank you, Jesus, for not leaving us orphans, but rising from the grave and coming to us in your Spirit, so we need never be alone. Grant us the grace to keep a resurrection perspective in the midst of all this life throws at us, remembering you are a risen Lord! Amen.

“But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: ‘Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.’ ... ‘This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.’” Acts 2:14, 32 NASB

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:3–9 NASB